

The pattern of the form of worship, as much as possible liberates itself from the form of worship as a rule based upon rites and regulations. Is it not that Christ through his death and resurrection has freed us from the bondages of law, regulations and rites? The patterns of worship, according to the New Testament, are in Christ Jesus freed from rites.

(iii) *The worship element.* In the service, opportunity must be given for its participants to express their worship to God in the liberty of the Spirit.

(iv) *The evangelistic element.* The form of worship must be a two-way channel: In one aspect it is a means of God to express his work of salvation for the world, in another aspect it is an invitation to the world/surrounding community. The pattern of Christ's life, moreover, is a pattern of a form of worship which covers all aspects of the ministry of the Gospel.

### 5. Summary and suggestions

a. We concluded that there is a place for culture in the Scriptures, and we learned how cultures began. God loves men in their cultures and wants to see them all redeemed through the salvation provided through his Son Jesus Christ. He wants them to hear his voice through his Word in their own cultural setting. We have sought to identify from the Bible such basic truths that are supra-cultural and must be preached and maintained in any cultural situation.

b. Furthermore, we have tried to point to the cultural-religious setting in Asia with its major religions, which present us with the challenge to separate original cultural factors (which are neutral and may be maintained) from such features as are opposed to Christian revelation in the Bible and must therefore be rejected by the Christians, to those features that are endorsed by the Bible and must be strengthened and kept.

c. A thorough study of the cultures, society structures, customs, religions past and present, has been recommended for Asia, so that the Gospel may be proclaimed in a relevant way. A clear separation of essential Christian elements from the "cultural enclothing" is attempted through a biblical ethnotheology, to help the messenger of the Gospel.

d. Adaptation of patterns of worship to those forms that are indigenous and familiar both to the worshipers and to their community, have been recommended as necessary, if barriers are to be kept down.

e. Besides the individual conversion pattern brought over from the West, I recommend the multi-individual mode of conversion which allows people to become Christians within their social structure, so that they need not feel they must become Westerners when they turn to Christ!

f. Let us consider that for the sake of reaching the millions of Asia with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a clear understanding of *biblical foundations and cultural identity* will be the basis of a new strategy for missions which will bring many not only to hear the Gospel, but also to become Christians in their own cultural setting.

## HOW TO EVALUATE CULTURAL PRACTICES BY BIBLICAL STANDARDS IN MAINTAINING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN ASIA REPORT

*Chairman: D. Chan*

*Secretary: G. Samuel*

### 1. Points of agreement (with Mr. Octavianus' paper)

- a. The importance of the subject in relation to the evangelization of Asia
- b. The need for further study of the subject
- c. Recognition of the diversity of each culture
- d. The culture itself is not evil
- e. Cultural and religious elements are often inseparable
- f. Culture is to be seen as a channel for communication
- g. The supracultural aspects as set forth in the Bible are more than the nine aspects listed in the paper (e.g., aspects of eschatology are to be included).

### 2. Significant disagreements

Though Hebrew and Greek cultures are media for revelation, these cultures are not to be considered as superior; however, it was pointed out that these cultures *are* superior.

### 3. List of major questions and answers

- a. Is multi-individual conversion typical in Asia? Often the Asians make their decisions in groups. The Asian society is not that individualistic, so Asians like to make decisions in mutual affection and dependence.
- b. Is Christianity imported to Asia from the West? No. Christianity is not imported from the West. Its origin is in Asia. But the Gospel message was brought back to Asia mainly by Western missionaries.
- c. How much of the cultural element can be retained? Those which are not contradictory to the Bible and those which do not have religious significance.
- d. Is individualism evil? Modern forms of individualism (these are unscriptural) are to be differentiated from individual's integrity before God and man.

### 4. Specific attitudes

People can become Christians in their own culture with a minimum of social dislocation. Cultural adaptation is acceptable, but should not lead to syncretism of any kind.

### 5. New emphasis in evangelization

- a. Use culture as a channel for communication.
- b. When the particular cultural practice is opposed to biblical revelation, find (or look for) suitable functional substitutes for the social life of the society concerned.

c. Clear the misunderstanding on the part of the listeners toward the Christians (or missionaries) before the Gospel is preached.

7. *More study and research needed*

a. The meaning and cultural implications of customs are to be studied in a particular culture in order to evaluate whether the customs are to be retained or not.

b. In-depth study of various cultures: study must be undertaken to help those working among Muslims, Hindus, followers of Confucius, etc.

c. Study of missionary anthropology for each region.

8. *Resources*

Information is available through the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

9. *Steps to share the contents of the paper with others*

a. Study our own church: list those which are cultural, elements of a foreign culture and those which need modification.

b. List practices often questioned in our own society and evaluate them.

c. Share the insights of the paper with other church members.

d. Incorporate the study of cultural aspects in the training programs for evangelists.

## BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN LATIN AMERICA

*Pablo M. Pérez*

The presence of Protestantism in Latin America has been felt in forms which are stereotyped to a certain extent and which have in turn been taken by many to be its distinctive characteristics. In different circles and areas "the brothers" — as believers are known throughout the continent — are identified by their habits, norms of conduct, patterns of social organization, worship forms, as well as one or two works of charity — besides a number of peculiarities which are somewhat inexplicable. Furthermore, a good number of these same believers is in complete agreement with such a description and some even find a special satisfaction with it and do not give any further thought to what it implies.

But when one goes deeper into what is really represented by the Protestant prototype in Latin America, one will discover that in many respects such a "prototype" is nothing more than the somewhat strange amalgamation of customs and habits which were prevalent in other countries some decades ago, and the Latin American character. And it is strange not only because it is out-of-date in those places where it originated and is thus considered a relic of the past, but also because it was from the very beginning a result of imported ideas with but little discernment, and consequently has not taken root in its new habitat. If there are no roots, its fruit has been practically nonexistent; in order to produce it almost every effort has been concentrated in those stereotyped forms mentioned above and in a conformity to them. In other words, an external demonstration of some secondary characteristics has been sought primarily, and it has been made to appear that they in turn are the final goal of every believer.

It is pertinent, then, to raise the question: Should customs and activities as practiced in our Protestant churches in Latin America be discarded? This question at the same time raises some others which help us focus the problem in its true dimension. It is not a case of discarding or accepting, but of the need to place the Protestant church in our continent in a position where new horizons open before it. This will mean on the one hand that the church should be enabled to reach a higher level of discernment concerning its own position, and that she may do so in the light of biblical directives. She should also be able to take the appropriate steps to find her true identity and, consequently, offer a more viable spiritual alternative to the average Latin American. On the other hand, it will also demand a rigorous discipline which should keep her from going back to old practices while allowing her to launch confidently into new undertakings which up to now have been outside her reach. No doubt it will also produce more stable and reliable foundations for the second and third generation Protestants. These in themselves represent a most serious problem in connection with the strengthening of the Protestant witness and the continuity necessary to establish a more solid and visible community